

December 10, 2007

B-19J

David W. Wresinski, Administrator
Project Planning Division
Bureau of Transportation Planning
Michigan Department of Transportation
Murray D. Van Wagoner Building
P.O. Box 30050
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Re: Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Blue Water Bridge
Plaza Study, St. Clair County, Michigan - EIS No. 20070388

Dear Mr. Wresinski:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 5 (U.S. EPA) has reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Blue Water Bridge Plaza (Plaza) Study located in St. Clair County, Michigan. Our comments in this letter are provided pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA Implementing Regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

A DEIS for the Study was prepared by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration with the goal of developing a 2030 plan for improvements at the Plaza and the I-94/I-69 Corridor (Corridor). Reasons stated for improvement to the Plaza and the Corridor including the following:

- ◆ Improve safety on the Bridge, at the Plaza, and on the Corridor;
- ◆ Minimize backups on Highway 402 in Canada and on the Corridor;
- ◆ Reduce vehicle and pedestrian conflicts on the Plaza and along the Corridor;
- ◆ Accommodate projected 2030 traffic growth and potential future facility needs;
- ◆ Accommodate latest Customs and Border Protection inspection technologies and procedures;
- ◆ Provide flexibility to accommodate future unknown inspection technologies and procedures;
- ◆ Improve security at the Plaza;
- ◆ Improve access between the Plaza and the Port Huron area; and
- ◆ Create a more visible and accessible Welcome Center.

The Draft EIS evaluates four alternatives:

No Build Alternative - The No Build Alternative would not involve any changes to the existing Plaza configuration or ramps, nor would it involve any improvements to the Black River Bridge or the Corridor. However, continued maintenance and technology improvements would continue as space allows.

- City East Alternative - The City East Alternative expands the existing plaza within the City of Port Huron. This alternative would relocate Pine Grove Avenue to the east around the expanded Plaza.
- City West Alternative - The City West Alternative expands the existing plaza within the City of Port Huron. This alternative is similar to the City East Alternative, except that Pine Grove Avenue would be relocated to the west around the expanded Plaza.
- Township Alternative - The Township Alternative involves the relocation of major Plaza functions to a mostly undeveloped site in Port Huron Township, 1.5 miles west of the current Plaza via a six-lane, secure roadway running between the existing Plaza and the new site.

The City West Alternative was identified as the Preferred Alternative in the DEIS.

The DEIS adequately conveys the process by which alternatives were developed, evaluated, and either dismissed or selected. It also explains the Plaza facilities/security design criteria used to select the Preferred Alternative. The Preferred Alternative fulfills the reasons stated in the DEIS for improving the Plaza.

Based on our review of the DEIS, the U.S. EPA has rated the Draft EIS as **“Environmental Concerns-Insufficient Information.”** This rating will be published in the Federal Register. A copy of our rating definitions is enclosed. We recommend the final EIS address the following issues.

Air Quality

We have participated in discussions with FHWA and MDOT during development of the DEIS and appreciate the efforts of both agencies to address our concerns concerning air impacts. We have reviewed the discussion concerning air impacts included in the DEIS, and offer the following comment.

During these discussions, we have expressed disagreement with the following statement found in Section 3.9.4 – What Impacts from Mobile Source Air Toxics (MSAT) are Anticipated with the Project’s Alternatives? (page 3.9-11):

“Technical shortcomings of emissions and dispersion models and uncertain science with respect to health effects prevent meaningful or reliable quantitative estimates of MSAT emissions at the project level.”

We continue to request that this statement be stricken from the EIS. We believe this statement is not consistent with current academic literature and other published guidance.

Green Building Design

A recent General Services Administration DEIS for the new U.S. Border Station and Commercial Port of Entry in Derby Line, Vermont, included commitments to design the project to incorporate elements of sustainable design and to certify buildings through the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program. LEED is the nationally-accepted benchmark for the design, construction, and operation of high-performance green buildings intended to maximize operational efficiency while minimizing environmental impacts.

We encourage the FHWA and MDOT to commit to creating a sustainable building implementation plan for the Blue Water Bridge Plaza. Such a plan could incorporate the use of recycled materials, natural light, passive solar heating, energy efficient lighting, water conserving plumbing, innovative stormwater management, and Energy Star equipment. For additional information regarding the LEED program, please access the following website: <http://www.usgbc.org/DisplayPage.aspx?CategoryID=19>. We are also available to assist the FHWA and MDOT in this effort.

In summary, we request the FHWA and MDOT revise the EIS by deleting the statement concerning emissions and dispersion modeling and committing to creating and implementing a sustainable building implementation plan for the Plaza. We are available to discuss these comments, and we look forward to receiving the Final EIS when it becomes available. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Kathleen Kowal of my staff at (312) 353-5206 or via email at kowal.kathleen@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

/s/ Kenneth A. Westlake 12/10/07

Kenneth A. Westlake, Supervisor
NEPA Implementation
Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance

Enclosure – Summary of Rating Definitions